MARVEL

2

PHILLIPS
CABAL
GRUNDETJERN

COSMIC GHOST RIDER

FRANK CASTLE HAS BEEN TO HELL AND BACK! HE WAS ONCE THE VIGILANTE KNOWN AS THE PUNISHER UNTIL HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION AS A SUPERNATURALLY EMPOWERED SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE. SINCE THEN, HE HAS ALSO SERVED AS A HERALD OF GALACTUS, THE RIGHT HAND OF THANOS AND A GUARDIAN OF THE GALAXY. AFTER LEAVING HIS MARK ACROSS ALL OF TIME AND SPACE, THE UNIVERSE HAS COME TO KNOW FRANK CASTLE AS...

COSMIC GHOST RIDER

"DUEL IDENTITY"

part two

FRANK CASTLE HAS BEEN LIVING OFF THE GRID ON AN ALIEN WORLD, HIS DAYS AS COSMIC GHOST RIDER FINALLY BEHIND HIM. FRANK HAS BEEN WORKING AT A TAVERN RUN BY MARLOW AND HIS DAUGHTER, AXELLE, HIS FORMER IDENTITY KEPT SECRET. BUT THIS FRAGILE PEACE WAS VIOLENTLY INTERRUPTED BY THE ARRIVAL OF BOUNTY HUNTER KRAL DRAVITT. SEEKING JUSTICE FOR FRANK'S PAST SINS, KRAL ATTACKED THE TAVERN, EXPOSING FRANK AND KILLING MARLOW.

MEANWHILE, FRANK HAS BEEN HAVING VIOLENT DREAMS...THAT ARE ACTUALLY VISIONS OF AN ALL-TOO-REAL SECOND COSMIC GHOST RIDER CURRENTLY SPREADING CHAOS AND VIOLENCE ACROSS THE GALAXY!

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A PLANET AT THE END OF THE GALAXY.

WE'RE GOING TO BE *LATE*...

...YOU *KNOW* HOW TIHAR GETS WHEN WE ARE *LATE*.

WE WON'T BE LATE. I ONLY NEED ONE MORE THING AND THEN WE WILL--

KRSSSSH

WHAT--?!

RUN!

TEEP!

TARGET ACQUIRED.

GOOD WORK, ULYSSES.

I EXPECTED SOMEONE WITH SUCH A LARGE BOUNTY ON THEIR HEAD TO SHOW A LITTLE MORE INTEREST IN *SELF-PRESERVATION.*

AND I EXPECTED SUCH A *PROLIFIC* BOUNTY HUNTER TO USE A *LITTLE* MORE DISCRETION.

BUT I SUPPOSE YOUR REPUTATION DOES NOT INCLUDE *SUBTLETY,* DOES IT...

...MONARK STARSTALKER?

YOU'RE SHI'AR.

AMBASSADOR CA'RAN.

AND I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.

AMBASSADOR OR NOT...

...THE CLIENT WANTS YOU *DEAD.*

YOU MEAN *THIS* CLIENT?

DEEET

THE BOUNTY HAS BEEN *TERMINATED.*

YOU SET A BOUNTY ON YOUR *OWN* HEAD?

EASIER TO GET YOU TO COME TO US THAN FOR US TO TRY TO FIND YOU.

WASTE OF MY TIME...

IF YOU LEAVE NOW, YOU WON'T KNOW THE *TRUE* REWARD WE ARE OFFERING YOU...

...FOR CAPTURING THE *COSMIC GHOST RIDER.*

YOU PUT A BOUNTY ON YOUR *OWN* HEAD AND BROUGHT ME TO THE END OF THE GALAXY JUST TO ASK ME TO KILL THE *COSMIC GHOST RIDER?*

NOT KILL. *CAPTURE.*

THE COSMIC GHOST RIDER IS THE FORMER HERALD OF GALACTUS AND IS IMBUED WITH THE POWER COSMIC.

HE WIELDS CHAINS MADE FROM THE BONES OF CYTTORAK AND TRAVELS THE GALAXY IN ORDER TO PUNISH--

I KNOW.

SEND THE IMPERIAL GUARD, AMBASSADOR.

I'M NOT WILLING TO *DIE* FOR YOUR EMPIRE'S DISPUTES--

THREAT DETECTED!

TEEP! HOSTILES INCOMING.

YOU *THINK?*

THOOM THOOM THOOM THOOM THOOM THOOM

PFT
PFT
PFT
PFT
PFT
PFT
TEEP!
KRAAKT
SKRAAAKT
DINK
I KNOW YOU TO BE A MAN OF CONVICTION, STARSTALKER.
THE COSMIC GHOST RIDER IS *NOT* WHAT HE ONCE WAS, AND I FEAR FOR THE SAFETY OF THE SHI'AR EMPIRE AND BEYOND.

LAST WEEK, THE RIDER ATTACKED A CASINO ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THETA QUADRANT THAT WAS UNDER *OUR* PROTECTION.

NO MOTIVE. NO MERCY.

LIKE I SAID...THE SHI'AR EMPIRE HAS THE RESOURCES TO--

NO. CURRENT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS PREVENT US FROM SENDING THE IMPERIAL GUARD... BUT YOU...SOMEONE WITH ***NO*** POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS...

HOW MUCH?

AND WHAT DID YOU OFFER THE ***LAST*** BOUNTY HUNTER?

THE REWARD IS PRESENTLY SET AT *100,000* CREDITS. WE'VE SENT OTHERS, BUT I'M AFRAID NONE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COMPLETE THE--

IT WAS... *80,000.*

THE SUM OFFERED IS INSUFFICIENT. ***TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND*** IS REQUIRED.

BUT...THAT IS MORE THAN ***DOUBLE*** THE PREVIOUS REWARD.

AND YOUR ***PREVIOUS*** BOUNTY HUNTER IS MOST LIKELY DEAD.

WIRE THE CREDITS, AMBASSADOR...

"...AND I WILL BRING YOU THE *COSMIC GHOST RIDER.*"

YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T DO IT...

...YOU *CAN'T* KILL ME.

NO...

...BUT *I CAN.*

DON'T DO SOMETHING YOU'LL REGR--

I WON'T.

ARGH!

MY EYE--!

AXELLE... ENOUGH.

GET AWAY FROM ME, FRANK!

...DAD...

KRSSH

I'M SO SORRY.

WE CAN'T STAY HERE...

...MORE WILL COME.

I'LL GET YOU OFF THIS PLANET...

...AND FIND A SAFE PLACE FOR YOU TO STAY.

JUST LAY LOW FOR A LITTLE WHILE, AXELLE.

THEY AREN'T AFTER YOU AND WON'T FOLLOW IF I LEAVE YOU--

AXELLE...? WHAT ARE YOU--?

WHAK

WHO ARE YOU?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I'M ASKING THE QUESTIONS.

WHO THE @#$% ARE YOU?

OKAY... EASY. I'M *FRANK*...JUST LIKE I TOLD YOU.

THEN *WHY* ARE PEOPLE TRYING TO KILL YOU, *FRANK?*

WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR--

WHY IS MY FATHER *DEAD?*

I'M THE COSMIC GHOST RIDER.

BUT I DON'T KNOW *WHY* ANYONE WOULD WANT ME DEAD. I'M... *RETIRED.*

COSMIC GHOST RIDER...? RETIRED...?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

LOOK, I'D LOVE TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY *ROMANTIC* NOTION OF HANGING UP THE FLAMING SKULL FACE IN ORDER TO LIVE A SOLITARY AND PEACEFUL LIFE IN A REMOTE PART OF THE UNIVERSE...

...BUT I DON'T THINK *THAT GUY* WOULD APPRECIATE THE NARRATIVE NUANCES OF MY STORY.

WHO--?

GIVE ME A *LITTLE* MORE CREDIT, RIDER.

I LOVE A GOOD STORY AS MUCH AS THE NEXT DOUR AND BROODING BOUNTY HUNTER...

...I JUST PREFER MINE WITH MORE *ACTION.*

DOWN!

BLAM BLAM BLAM

WHO THE HELL IS *THAT?*

NOT SURE. WE JUST MET.

YOU SAID YOU'RE THE COSMIC GHOST RIDER, RIGHT?

SO ***PROVE*** IT, FRANK.

WHAT...? NO, I TOLD YOU... I'M RETIRED. I CAN'T JUST--

CAN'T OR ***WON'T?***

WHEN MY FATHER HAD A GUN TO HIS HEAD, YOU DID ***NOTHING.***

IF YOU WANT TO ***KEEP*** DOING NOTHING... ***FINE.*** BUT I WON'T BE JOINING YOU.

AXELLE! STOP!

BLAM

PFFT

TEEP!

UNGH!

AXELLE!

THEY TOLD ME TO BRING *HIM* ALIVE...

...BUT I *DOUBT* THE SHI'AR CARE WHETHER *YOU* LIVE OR--

TIME TO PUT THE GOLF CLUBS AWAY...

...BECAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE *RETIREMENT'S OVER.*

BUT I THINK I'LL STILL KEEP THE HAWAIIAN SHIRTS.

THEY'RE FLATTERING *AND* MADE FROM SURPRISINGLY BREATHABLE MATERIAL--

HEY, WHAT HAPPENED TO MY SUPER-AWESOME FLAMING CHAINS OF BAD#@$...?

THE NAME IS *KIND OF* A MOOT POINT WITHOUT THE *FLAMES.*

IT ALMOST FEELS LIKE...

"...MY POWERS AREN'T WORKING RIGHT."

I WASN'T GONNA TURN YOU IN. I SWEA--

DEAD OR ALIVE

BLAM!

WANTED

DEAD OR ALIVE 20.000

DEAD OR ALIVE 20.000

ELSEWHERE IN THE UNIVERSE.

BLAM

YOU CAN COME OUT NOW.

JOIN ME FOR A DRINK.

Y-YOU WON'T *HURT* ME?

NO GUNS. I PROMISE.

THEY WEREN'T *ALL* BOUNTY HUNTERS.

WHEN YOU'RE WANTED *DEAD OR ALIVE,* THAT HARDLY SEEMS LIKE A NECESSARY DISTINCTION.

SIT.

YOU ARE *WANTED* BECAUSE OF THE CRIMES YOU HAVE COMMITTED... *COSMIC GHOST RIDER.*

YOU'RE AN OMNIAN.

I AM.

YET YOU WOULD SEE ME DEAD. THAT SEEMS... CONTRARY TO YOUR *TEACHINGS.*

I DO BELIEVE IN *JUSTICE,* RIDER.

ONE DOESN'T NEED RELIGION TO KNOW THAT THE *SLAUGHTER* OF INNOCENTS *SHOULD* BE PUNISHED.

YOU JUDGE ME, YET YOU ARE *HERE.*

I'M A PRIEST, NOT A SHUT-IN.

YOU BELIEVE IN REINCARNATION, PRIEST.

IS THAT A *QUESTION?*

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT OUR PAST LIVES COULD EVER BLEED INTO THE *PRESENT...*

...THROUGH VISIONS OR DREAMS... OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

ARE YOU HAVING VISIONS OR DREAMS...*OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?*

MAYBE.

DREAMS ARE THOUGHT TO PRESENT A LINK TO *OURSELVES...*

...TO OUR INNERMOST *DESIRES* AND *FEARS--*

YOU THINK IT'S MY *DESIRE* TO SHOW WEAKNESS?

YOU THINK I FEAR *ANYTHING?*

Y-YOU... *UNGH...* PROMISED YOU WOULDN'T... HURT...

HRN!

I SAID NO *GUNS.*

DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT *SPIKES.*

SPANG

PICKING ON A *PRIEST...?*

...THAT'S NOT THE FRANK CASTLE *I'VE* HEARD ABOUT.

VALKYRIE?!

TO BE CONTINUED!

NEXT:

IT'S THE MIGHTY VALKYRIE VERSUS COSMIC GHOST RIDER--BUT WHICH OF THE NOW TWO RIDERS IS SHE FACING?! AS THE MYSTERY DEEPENS, THE TWO COSMIC GHOST RIDERS DRAW CLOSER TO EACH OTHER FOR A FINAL CONFRONTATION IN THE DEPTHS OF SPACE. BUT FIRST, THEY BOTH MUST SURVIVE THE BEVY OF BOUNTY HUNTERS, HEROES AND VILLAINS IN HOT PURSUIT!

EMAIL US AT MHEROES@MARVEL.COM AND MARK YOUR MESSAGES "OKAY TO PRINT" FOR A CHANCE TO SEE THEM ANSWERED IN FUTURE ISSUES!

ZONE